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HOW TO PROMOTE *Missions* IN YOUR CHURCH



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BY A PASTOR

1. THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

It is often said, "We would like to have a missionary program in our church, but the people are not interested." This unfortunate situation will be largely overcome if two basic requirements are met:

A Missionary-minded Pastor. The pastor is the key to the missionary program in the local church. He must clearly discern that men without Christ are lost; he must be constrained by the love of God for their salvation; and what he discerns he must teach his people.

A Spiritually-minded People. Such there must be, if the local church is to lift its eyes upon the field which is already white unto harvest. The faithful ministry of the pastor in opening the scriptures will provoke a godly

interest in the lost and result in divine action on their behalf: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. . . . Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. . . . And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (Nehemiah 8:8, 10, 12).

2. THE BALANCED CHURCH PROGRAM.

Evangelism. The church in any locality is responsible for the unsaved about it, therefore evangelism is pertinent.

Teaching. The local church is a fellowship of believers, and the exhortation of the Word is: "Take heed . . . to feed the church of God"

Missions. The command of our Lord, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) was given to all the disciples, and not to the apostles only. This truth should be so emphasized that every believer may realize his responsibility to have an active share in this work as the Lord may lead.

No church is fulfilling its responsibility before God except it diligently pursue these three

things: The evangelizing of its immediate locality, the building up of the saints in their most holy faith, and the furthering of a world-wide gospel ministry.

3. THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE BELONGS TO THE LOCAL CHURCH.

This is clearly seen in Acts 13:1-3:

- (a) "IN THE CHURCH" the missionary material is to be found.
- (b) TO THE CHURCH "the Holy Spirit said."
- (c) THROUGH THE CHURCH "they sent them away."

4. THE EXTENSIVE MISSIONARY PROGRAM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

Missionary Societies. The church at Antioch had but one missionary society and that was the congregation. It is essential to the highest attainment in missionary activity that the congregation be united in every phase of its missionary interests. Societies in themselves can be useful, but they should never be permitted to promote division of interest.

A Missionary Sunday-School. Every department, from the nursery through the senior department, may have its missionary objective. There could be separate envelopes for the missionary offering. One or more missionaries could be selected as contacts for each department; and their names kept before the department week by week. A map of their fields of

service, indicating clearly where the missionaries labor, could be hung in a conspicuous place. Regular correspondence could be carried on profitably by the department of superintendent or teachers, and, in the adult classes, it is helpful to assign a missionary or two to each class. Correspondence could be carried on between the missionary and the class, and a class envelope provided for a missionary offering. Items of interest could be read or related, and the missionary and his work frequently remembered in prayer. Periodically, the missionaries could be reassigned, so that each department and each class of the higher departments would become personally acquainted with each missionary and interested in the world-wide program of the whole church.

Missionary Barrels. Miniature missionary barrels or other coin-collecting devices can be distributed to members of the Sunday school, with a day set once or twice a year for bringing in their money.

Pledges. Some churches have found that a system of pledging is a decided help in planning a missionary budget. These pledges should be made at the time of a missionary conference or special missionary day when missionary interest has been stimulated. Annual contributions to missions in some churches have been doubled and multiplied by the prayerful use of this method.

Literature, Maps, Pictures. Literature of re-

commended and proved missionary societies should be available to all on a table set aside for its display. The members of the congregation should be encouraged to purchase and read good missionary books and missionary magazines. A well-stocked, up-to date missionary lending library would also help to stimulate missionary interest. A large world map, neatly framed, designed to be in harmony with the interior of the church, can be hung in the auditorium. Small lights indicating the location of each missionary will direct the interest of the congregation to the church's missionary program. Uniform pictures of the missionaries, attractively framed and placed so that the congregation will be constantly reminded of their workers and prompted to pray for them, will greatly increase interest. Missionary letters can be mimeographed in whole or in part and placed at the disposal of the church's membership and friends. A missionary service flag, bearing a missionary slogan, may also be hung in the church auditorium. It is suggested that this be in the form of a blue-bordered white flag, with blue stars or crosses to indicate missionaries in the service of the Lord and gold emblems for those who have died in service.

Young People's Groups. Every young people's group in the church should carry a missionary responsibility. Many a live young people's group is contributing to the missionary program of the church, even to the extent of fully supporting a worker.

The Prayer Meeting. Correspondence from missionaries should be read in part at the prayer meeting hour, and specific prayer requests should be presented regularly. Part of the prayer time ought to be given to foreign missions.

Church Services. The pastor can always include items of missionary interest in his Sunday announcements, and bring missionaries by name before the Lord in his prayer. There should be occasions when the pastor speaks on the subject of missions: The world need, the Bible motives, the individual responsibility, and the joy of scriptural giving. Missionary offering envelopes placed in the pews for the convenience of the congregation will encourage contributions to the church's general missionary fund.

Missionary Committee. It is well to have a missionary committee to coordinate the missionary program of the church and a missionary secretary who will be responsible for correspondence with missionaries on the field. The missionary committee may be made up in one of several ways: (1) The pastor and the missionary secretary; (2) the pastor, the missionary secretary, and the official board; (3) the pastor, the missionary secretary, and a committee appointed by the church to work with them; (4) the pastor, the missionary secretary, and the missionary leader from each major group within the church—young people's societies, Sunday school departments, etc.

Missionary Days. Some churches find it helpful to observe one missionary Sunday each month, stressing missions in the hymns, the prayers, and in the sermon. Even if the sermon is not exclusively missionary, some aspect of missionary work can be touched upon. Usually it is announced on these days that the offering will be wholly devoted to missions. Other churches observe such days once a quarter.

Missionary Speakers. As opportunity offers, true-hearted, able, enthusiastic missionaries at home on furlough should be asked to present the work of the mission field. We have good scriptural precedents for this in Acts 14:26, 27; 15:4, 12; 21:19. These verses tell how Paul and Barnabas on their return from their missionary journeys rehearsed all that God had done with and through them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. Not only will it be found profitable to devote a church service to missions from time to time, but also to have briefer messages at the prayer meetings, the young people's meetings, and in the different departments of the Sunday school. There is no better means of arousing and maintaining missionary interest and provoking Christians to prayer and financial support than personal contact with the missionary himself. Always the great principle should be remembered and acted upon that "facts are the fagots that feed missionary fires."

Missionary Volunteers. Young people in the church should be encouraged to dedicate their

lives to the Lord for His service, and when they have done this, be given opportunity to tell of the Lord's dealings with them. Missionary volunteers should be recognized, prayed for, guided, and helped in their preparation.

5. THE INTENSIVE MISSIONARY PROGRAM.

The Missionary Conference. A missionary conference should be an annual occasion and, rightly conducted, will produce glorious results. Some churches have a week-end conference, others begin on Saturday and continue till Wednesday or Thursday, or begin on Wednesday and work up to a climax on Sunday evening. Then there are some that begin on Saturday evening and continue for eight days through the second Sunday.

a. The Bible. It is helpful to accompany the missionary conference with Bible teaching which emphasizes the great evangelical themes and the church's responsibility for the evangelization of the world.

b. Prayer Hour. A stated prayer hour throughout the days of the conference is all important. Members of the congregation should be encouraged to attend these prayer sessions.

c. Missionary Guests. Who should be invited? The average church will, of course, have its denomination's missionaries. From among these should be selected those who can best present the work of missions. Many churches are interested in interdenominational missionary societies. Such missions are for the most part

scriptural, thoroughly evangelistic, and fruitful. These missions will gladly, through their home office, cooperate with the pastor or missionary committee of the local church in providing speakers for a missionary conference. A full list of member-societies of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, with further information and help, may be secured from the Secretary of the I.F.M.A., 375 Carlton Avenue, Brooklyn 5, N. Y.

d. Entertainment. God's children, when rightly approached, will gladly open their homes to entertain missionary guests. Christian hospitality brings blessing both to the missionaries and to the ones who entertain.

e. Finances. Although not essential, the budget of a conference may be estimated and, if possible, met before the conference begins, so that the offerings during the conference hours may be wholly devoted to positive missionary work.

f. Program. The program should be directed to one or more objectives, such as:

The general promotion of missionary endeavor in church and community;

The presentation of accomplishments of the gospel, with emphasis on one country, one continent, or the world at large;

A presentation of the local church's missionary commitments;

The challenge of unoccupied fields;

The dedication of life to missionary service;

Planning and meeting an annual missionary budget;

Undertaking special projects such as the securing of equipment and transportation funds for outgoing missionaries.

Of course, circumstances differ in each church and district and every group must be guided by them, but where there is a real desire to promote missionary interest, the Holy Spirit will guide to ways and means that will be effective.

g. Results. While the missionaries tell of the work of God far afield, it is not unusual for souls to be saved in the congregation during a missionary conference; a greater burden for prayer for the whole world should be laid upon the people of God; there should be an increased zeal in local evangelism; new recruits should be called out to carry the message to the ends of the earth.

6. PROBLEMS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH MISSIONARY PROGRAM WHICH ARE NOT TOUCHED ON IN THIS LEAFLET MAY BE PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL FOREIGN MISSION ASSOCIATION, AND HELPFUL AND INTERESTED COOPERATION WILL BE GIVEN.

Issued by the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association of North America. Price of this pamphlet 30 cents per dozen. Single copies of other pamphlets free. Complete set 35 cents. Address: I.F.M.A., 375 Carlton Avenue, Brooklyn 5, New York.